

From The Pulpit Of



Spiritual Gifts

No. 28

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

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Series: 1 Corinthians

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Text

12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Introduction

What is true spirituality all about? I know that when we open a passage like this, everyone's ears perk up. Everyone comes with preconceived notions about and past experiences with spiritual gifts, and others are eager to hear the speaker's take on a unique and highly controversial topic. I have to say from the get-go that I am going to address some elements of the definition and application of some exotic spiritual gifts during this sermon. But I also think this text is much more than a curiosity about the continued validity and proper use of tongues. The questions this text addresses are much more fundamental to the Christian life. Who is really spiritual? Is my church spiritual? Am I spiritual? Am I even saved? You may think others are more dynamic, emotional, excited, joyful, with more spiritual experiences than you. OR, you may think you are so much more spiritual than they are. “I have a great prayer life, know the Bible really well, have emotional quiet times, mystical experiences during the Lord’s Supper, hear God clearly speak me, and sometimes even pray in tongues in my quiet times.” Does that make you more spiritual? Does that make you a next level Christian?

Leon Morris - “It was universally accepted in antiquity that some people, who were in specially close touch with the divine, had special spiritual endowments. At times they behaved in unpredictable ways, threw themselves about, spoke in a frenzied manner, and so on. Their ‘enthusiasm’ was the mark of the presence of the divine spirit within them. From the day of Pentecost on, some within the Christian church manifested unusual spiritual gifts. They did things like speak in a tongue they did not understand. To many

early believers this kind of thing was pre-eminently the mark of a ‘spiritual’ person. By comparison the practice of Christian virtue seemed staid and colourless.” Not so unlike our culture – Some churches have more energetic worship, charismatic experiences, rapid numerical growth, etc. In the midst of this culture, Paul explains that those who are spiritual are the ones who know and live the answer to four questions. Not, is something crazy and spiritual going on? More discernment than that is needed. The 1st question:

Who's In Charge? 1-3 – Paul is addressing questions from the church, and in section discussing how they should behave in corporate gatherings. Finished sections on dress and Lord's Supper. **1 Concerning**-moving on to questions of spirituality in corporate worship. ESV footnote. Literally *Spirituals*, things, people, gifts. Not **uninformed** signals this is important, they can't be ignorant about this. Pay attention! **2** Described as **pagans**, *gentiles* before being brought into the people of God. Were regularly led astray to **dumb idols**. Pagan mystery religions were defined by charismatic leaders, showy, loud, dynamic, emotional, human-exalting, spiritual, with various spiritual offerings that normally included sexual immorality and demon worship. But lead to nothing but silent, worthless **idols**. As an example, Oracle of Delphi fell into trances and gave cryptic prophecies. Corinthians still had some pagan tendencies, imported issues into the church. Their corporate worship consisted of wild and disorderly stuff like speaking in tongues or prophesying dominating church meetings. **3** The true spiritual person is the one who knows who's in charge. No spiritual person says “Jesus is accursed.” **Debate**: cursing in Jesus' name, misapplication of Gal. 3:13, extreme example of dishonoring Jesus, or literal statement when in trance-prophecy-tongue. Could be all, but when discernment is lost, anything is possible in crazy demonic spirituality. The Spirit glorifies Christ and moves people to exalt him, proclaim him, and submit to Jesus. Spiritual things must be discerned based on conformance to the gospel message. **Jesus is Lord** is the most basic proclamation of Christian doctrine in the NT, **Rom-Phil**. *A spiritual person knows and proclaims the gospel of Jesus' Lordship. A spiritual person exercises discernment, orients all faith and spiritual activity around the faithful proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ from God's Word.* The next question:

Who Gets Credit? 4-6 – There is diversity of gifts from Spirit that perform a diversity of service to one Lord that accomplishes diverse activities powered by one God. Notice the Trinitarian formula-not a fully fleshed doctrine of the trinity, but it shows diversity and unity all attributed to one source working. Authority belongs to all three. Even when not fully spelled it out, the Bible is trinitarian in assumptions and language. **Cyril**. Electricity. All comes from God so that only he gets credit in the end. Soli Deo gloria! Next:

What Are The Gifts? 8-10 – Sample list for Paul's purposes, not random, not exhaustive. There are other non exhaustive **NT lists**. Sometimes lists are abused or overinterpreted in charismatic circles. Notice Spirit 7x in paragraph. I see three groups that supplement-check each other. Teaching (wisdom-knowledge), Actions (faith-healing-miracles), Ecstatic (prophecy-discernment-tongues-interpretation). **8 Wisdom** is practical for life decisions. **Knowledge** is facts and information. Sometimes could be supernatural or intuition, but not necessarily. Some people are wise and know things. **9**

Faith not simply saving. All believers have this. Seems to be referring to extraordinary faith to attempt great things and trust God in the process. Or faith to encourage a discouraged church. “God’s got this/us!” Faith may lead to **healing**. **Calvin!** Apparently not ask much confusion in his day! Notice plural, not generic healing but various **gifts of healing** accomplished by Spirit through people who have faith to ask or command (blind, lame, sick). *Medical workers shouldn’t be ashamed of the ordinary gifts.* **10 Miracles** (powerful activities) are non-healing actions or judgments (striking dead or blind, freeing prisoners, casting out demons). **Prophecy-tongues** will be dealt with in more detail but listed with an accompanying gift to supplement-check. **Prophecy** seems to be timely word directly from God about situation or future (Antioch, Judas, Silas, Agabus, Philip’s daughters). **Distinguishing spirits** may be sensing when evil spirits are at work, but mostly discernment as a check on prophets, test spirits, **1Jn4:1**. **Tongues**-languages. Many views, studies. Likely confusing for the churches, and speakers seemed to dominate and create chaos in corporate worship. So Paul focuses on it in this section. Listed last as the main topic to be addressed in rest of section. Not a gift all Christians get to prove salvation or second blessing. **Various kinds**, at least 2. Supernatural communication (Acts2) and ecstatic personal prayer language to strengthen speaker, Spirit praying in our weakness, **Rom8**. Paul did it. Some kind can be **interpreted**. Some can decipher and explain languages. Final question:

What Is The Purpose of The Gifts? 7&11 – 7 All gifts and abilities are given individually by the Spirit (one and the same), sovereignly distributed for the common good: benefit, corporate flourishing, mutual upbuilding of the body. **Gifts are not for self-exaltation**. *Do you have an ability you are misusing to exalt yourself? Do you idolize gifted people rather than praising and giving the credit to the Spirit?* **Gifts are not given to squander** because you are shy or embarrassed or nervous or lazy or afraid of appearing showy or looking dumb. *Do you have a talent you are burying in the ground?* If you are a believer, God wants you to use your gifts for the common good. He gave it to accomplish his will. We are all stewards of the spiritual gifts given to us like **delivery drivers**. **Wiersbe**. *Are you using your gifts?*

Gospel – I may have a slightly contrarian view on gifts-skills-abilities. Some think they are only supernatural, permanent gifts that always come after being born again. But no one is all wise or discerning all the time. No one can heal everyone. Many have natural abilities or resources bestowed by a sovereign God that he uses when we are saved. Everything is grace. Paul already said **1Cor4:7**. All of things are done by the Spirit. Sometimes he is more obviously supernaturally active and other times more behind the scenes, but he is always working all things according to the counsel of his will. He even works through non-believers. Theologian John Owen stated that some may have spiritual “gifts without graces.” We may have flashy abilities without receiving God’s free gift of grace. Jesus says, **Mt7:21-22**. Miracles? Casting out demons? Prophecy? Those are spiritual gifts, and they even said “Lord”, but they didn’t know Jesus. The most important gift today is the free gift of grace through faith in Jesus. **Eph2**. The Bible describes grace and forgiveness as a sovereign gift from God. We cannot boast about it. Spiritual gifts incomplete without the Greatest Gift. Christ was *cursed* on the cross for us (taking our place) and then justified resurrected Lord. Sends the Spirit to offer salvation

and gifts to all who put faith in him and submit to him as Lord. Receive Jesus by faith and then serve others with thanksgiving to God. We cannot choose which other gifts we will receive, but we are all given the opportunity to receive the free gift of salvation offered to us in Jesus.

Conclusion – So who's really spiritual? The one who knows Jesus and serves him as Lord by faithfully using the gifts given by the Spirit for the common good. Receive his gift of grace and use whatever abilities the Spirit gives you for his glory and for the common good.

References

Galatians 3:13 - Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

Romans 10:9 - because, if you confess with your mouth that *Jesus is Lord* and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Philippians 2:10–11 - so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father.

Cyril of Jerusalem - One and the same rain comes down on all the world, yet it becomes white in the lily, red in the rose, purple in the violets and hyacinths, different and many-colored in manifold species. Thus it is one in the palm tree and another in the vine, and all in all things, though it is uniform and does not vary in itself. For the rain does not change, coming down now as one thing and now as another, but it adapts itself to the thing receiving it and becomes what is suitable to each. Similarly the Holy Spirit, being One and of one nature and indivisible, imparts to each one his grace “according as he will.”

NT Lists – Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and 12:28-30, Ephesians 4:7-12, 1 Peter 4:10-11

John Calvin – By the gift of healings every one knows what is meant.

1 John 4:1 - Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Romans 8:26 - Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 1 Corinthians 13:1 - If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

Warren W. Wiersbe - Gifts are not for individual enjoyment, but for corporate employment. [I could add: Not for individual glorification, but church edification. Personal promotion, but for Christian devotion.]

1 Corinthians 4:7 - ...What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Matthew 7:21-22 - “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’

Ephesians 2:8–10 - For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the **gift** of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Immanuel Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, by Pastor Brock Brockway on Sunday morning, January 11, 2026. It is not meant to be a polished essay, but was written to be delivered orally. The mission of Immanuel is to be a multiplying community that enjoys and proclaims the Good News of Christ in the great city of Chicago.